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A Comparative Analysis of Hir with other Female Protagonists.

Abstract: This paper studies the characterization of females through the institution of love and romance as reflected in various love stories. The fictional narrative presenting the struggling life of a girl caught up in a violent flood of domination in medieval Punjab is taken into consideration. Many other heroines were entrapped in this flood but the present study cynosures on the variations between their behavior for surviving through the situation or getting rid of it. Suffering silently for several years, Hir, the protagonist of the narrative Hir Ranjha, decides to come out of the life of molestation and oppression by demonstrating the hidden agency of a woman to challenge the adequacy of men and traditions. Hir, through her powerful spoken words, not only uncovers the male supremacy by challenging to the manipulation and exploitation prevailing in the world but also lays bare the unlawful and illicit practices of the so-

called spiritual preachers and religious preceptors. This pattern of revolts and conflicts leads her to reflect on the constraints that women face in rural era and explore strategies to counter the situation when objectified, alienated and confined within boundaries. The emphasis of this paper is to trace hir's journey from a life of innocence to the agitation of proprietary rights. Also this paper will divulge the difference of behaviour of Sahiban and Sassi from Hir. The symbols Hir, Sahiban and Sassi are appropriately presented in a rational framework. It explicates how hir is comparatively demarcated from other two heroines.

Keywords: Hir, female protagonists, variation in stimulation, compelled marriages, women's defection, astute killing.

Punjab with its name displays a vast territory regarding bounty of art, its depth and its soothing effect on the lives of the people. Punjab has introduced itself with its part and parcel, Punjabi language which is famous for its upscale literature of qissa . The narratives of qissa are deeply embedded in Punjabi's history. Qissa was a leading genre of Punjabi literary production from the seventeenth through the early twentieth centuries. Punjabi qisse served as both high literature and popular entertainment. Punjabi's survival and continuous vitality through the colonial period signals discernible limit to colonial dominance which produced higher vibes in qissa. My Approach in this paper is to focus on the character variations of female protagonists of famous qissa of love.

Punjabi literature's survival also pinpointed on a distinctive array of devotional practices, social relations, vocations and nature of the characters that accompanied its production and circulation from the seventeenth through the early twentieth centuries. Punjabi qisse present

a widespread, religiously plural and love-centered poetics of strong and bold determination. The form and narratives of the qissa were gradually adopted into Indian vernacular literatures.

The qissa tradition strengthens its pillars deep to the Punjabi ground with the insertion of indigenous romance narratives. The themes that surface in the Punjabi qissa were: romance, communal differences, love marriages, social and psychological variation, caste, creed, domination and rebellion for justice. There are number of poets who composed Punjabi qisse by providing a comprehensive sampling of various characters, their behavior across time, space, class, caste and religion. Punjabi love legends' formation emerges a range of sites where Punjabi literature was performed and also the practices associated with the era. The importance of love – legends as entertainment and sources of pleasure is not only the focus of the present research rather the paper will emphasize the variations among various female protagonists performing in the different love stories belonging to same domain of qissa-kav . A number of poets composed Punjabi qissa in the late –nineteenth century and early twentieth century. These poets can be better discerned from their texts rather than their names. Among these some that continue to be popular beyond the geographic locale of the Punjab are Sohni- Mahival, Mirza - Sahiban, Sassi- Punnun, Laila- Majnun, Shirin- Farhad and most popular of all, Hir -Ranjha. Out of these, Hir- Ranjha serves a typical example, whose female protagonist has made a unique entity in the world where patriarchal traces prevailed in its full swing. Hir is taken as a key word of this research paper whose comparison with other female characters of other love-legends will provide a sense of consummation to the theme of the research project.

Hir, a glorious name for a charming figure of a Rustic Epic of Punjab, The Love of Hir and Ranjha by a famed artist, Waris Shah and further translated by a great literary personality, Sant

Singh Sekhon delineates the everlasting love story of the young lovers who worshipped each other having a blind faith on their love. With the introductory remarks about the heroine, Hir whose name describes her nature having diamond like looks and delicacy in behaviour . The Superb beauty of Hir is impossible to describe even by writing pages of pages. It can be said that Hir is beyond words to describe. But the poet has very artistically portrayed Hir with the use of various rhetorical strategies:

A fairy from the garden of Lanka,

or the court of Indra, or the circle of the moon

Hir would outshine a thousand beauties,

far lovelier than the loveliest queen.

All like a row of forest deer,

the amazons come with Hir at their head,

Who rolls like a wave or skims the skies

as a crane that flies a head of the flock,

And shines like a sword that it just unsheathed
to fall upon the fatal block.

And gallants coming across her path
will surely fall upon its blade. (Sekhon 30)

Besides her physical charms and their rendering, present research paper cracks on describing the nature of hir under various circumstances. From her youth she has been outlined as an innocent girl having attractive prowess which was very famous in the nearest locales. Her physical description constructs a delicate image of her in the minds of the readers but actually she was strong and determined for her rights and belongings.

As per the title of the paper other female protagonists are also the constituent for fulfilling the purpose of comparison. Out of them one is sahiban, the female hero of a famous love tale Mirza Sahiban by Peelu. Before the end of sixteenth century, Punjabi poets had begun to compose narratives of indigenous tales of love. It is confusing to say if there was a casual analogy between The adoption of love and romance in literature and in actual life but it is clear that these tales of love had to deal with the complication of love as a social abnormality. Peelu's Mirza Sahiban is important for various reasons. It is a more realistic account of life in Punjab, with its treatment of love as a plainly secular phenomenon, not as something approaching the divine. While reading it, one recognises that sahiban was born in the house of Khan Khiva, the head of Syals and Mirza at Danabad in the house of Wanjhal Khan, the chief of the Kharal tribe. Sahiban's beauty has

especially been admired like that of hir. The story Peelu narrates, introduces with the situation that Mirza and Sahiban were at same mosque for education where they fell in love with each other. Peelu, metaphorically describes their phase of education transforming into phase of love at mosque:

Sahiban parhdi pattian, Mirza parhe Quran

Vich maseet de laggian, jaane kull jahan

Sahiban learnt her letters and Mirza read the Quran

And in the school they fell in love, so that the whole world knew (of it)

A famed Sufi poet Hashim Shah,

Best known for his story Sassi Punnun penned many other qissa. His technique of narrating qissa

Speaks for depth in his words and an immense aptitude he had. As Waris Shah immortalized hir

ranjha in Punjabi poetry, same has been done with Sassi- Punnun by Hashim Shah. Sassi was a

Princess of Bhamboor and Punnun Khan was the son of King Mir Hoth Khan. Sassi was raised

by a washer man who found her in a box thrown in the river by king Bhamboor according to the

Prediction of the astrologer. Sassi's beauty became a fairy tale as she grew up. Stories of her

Divine beauty spread across the region which inspired Punnun to meet her.

The research paper comprehends a collation on the basis of character analysis. Various female characters have been inaugurated to step forward towards a result and to rectify the title of the present research. Hir, the key word at focus displays a disparate nature and reaction for the contemporary situation. Sahiban and Sassi are also the figures that have been displayed above with their love stories. Sahiban, with her shrewdness tried to overpower her love. At one side she dared to escape with Mirza but somewhere she was inclined towards and attached with home and her blood relations. She instead of challenging the situation and troubles submitted herself in front of the male dominated society. She broke all the arrows of Mirza,hoping to avoid any bloodshed and also to rescue her brothers. Unarmed Mirza fought well but finally was overpowered by the brothers of Sahiban and stabbed. Sahiban put her life to death there, with Mirza's sword. It can be reckoned that unlike Hir, at some instances Sahiban was not determined. She preferred the path of love but didn't survive much. Death is inevitable but a person should make some efforts to which Hir invited stoutly. Both Hir and Sahiban interpolated themselves into the terrain of love and romance. Both of them were aware of the obstructions that will certainly snag their way. Both were the members of the male oriented society where the head of the family or the father took decisions and everybody else in the family had to follow. Families of both opposed their love. Both of them were tied in a relationship to another person.

Many similarities are there but a grand variation lies in the retort propelled by both of them. Sahiban, one of them submitted herself in front of patriarchal society and chose death instead of surviving through thick and thin. Despite of various troubles, Hir was unflinched for her love and remained unwavering for her marriage ritual. Male orientation solemnized her wedding but even then she didn't yield. In consequence she was blessed with Ranjha after many ups and downs. Hir was an open challenge for the society where women were treated as a puppet and were moulded like a toy of clay. Like Sahiban, Hir didn't foster for her parents and other members of the society even she ignored her forefathers in front of her mother:

'Enough, O mother, stop this swearing,

to swear, you know, is the devil's wont.

'You slay a daughter to invite a curse,

for woman is the soruce divine.

'O may some pague descend from heaven

and carry me from this place of sin!

'But Ranjha I will never forsake,

though father, grandfather, great-grand-father rant. (Sekhon 56, 57)

She neither performed anything deceitful with Ranjha nor opted for death. She was cunningly and intentionally sentenced to death by applying a trick upon her. Comparatively, it can be said that Hir had conquered her love with her courage and sufferings but she had been put to death forcefully. She can be considered more adventurous, self-assured, red-blooded, heroic and high-spirited in comparison with Sahiban.

Another female hero Sassi has also been taken as an inception of comparability for the dissection of her attitude towards the social, psychological and personal nuisances during her times. Sassi left home for Punnun but didn't bear much. Punnun was intoxicated by his bothers for obstructing the love of Sassi and Punnun. Sassi after hearing this news lost her mind and ran barefoot through the desert towards the hometown of Punnun . Her feet blistered, her dry lips parched from constantly crying the name of her lover. She met a shepherd whom she asked for help, but instead he tried to violate her. She barely managed to escape. But sassi being broken down and fed up by the circumstances gave up and prayed to god for her decease. Suddenly the mountains split and buried her alive. When Punnun woke up, he was devastated too. He ran towards the village of sassi. When he reached that mountain he met the shepherd who told him what happened to Sassi. In a fit of grief, he lamented and the earth swallowed him too. Both Sassi and Hir belonged to same era of patriarchal construct. Both were the participants of the activity of love and romance. Both were opposed by the family and the society. Both endured numerous torments on their way. Both left home for their love. Rather comes the dissimilarity between the recoiling of both. Death prevails in both of the cases but the status of death is clashing at all. Sassi opted for death herself by laying down arms and ended her

life instead of facing injustice done to her by the society. Whereas Hir didn't lose hope till her last breath. She didn't diverted herself towards suicide or demise. It's a different case that she was assassinated by her own parents very shrewdly. Hir can be estimated more powerful and strong than Sassi.

Hir Ranjha and other texts discussed earlier portrays female figures displaying their love budding. The representation of female gender in the present research involves characteristic that woman had acted as the active agents even she had been reinscribed as the inferior fellow with a subservient status in the society. Male focused community limited the social role of women, subordinated and subjected them to patriarchal norms and desires. As it is a natural phenomenon that every line has an end. There is always a war to end all wars. To confront and to survive through war is not everybody's cup of tea. Character demarcations play a pivotal role in judging the stamina of the person.

A microanalysis of the female character like Hir, Sahiban and Sassi has been performed earlier. This analysis has been investigated by revealing the incidents happened with the beloveds during their tenure of love. Basically those who indulge themselves in love, they naturally face opposition from society, family and other elements existing in that environment. Like Hir, Sahiban and Sassi tackled homogeneous issues regarding their love with Ranjha, Mirza and Punnun. The aim of present research paper is to survey the intensity of tackling and the potential of suffering and endurance. It is done on the basis of character analysis. Hir made an effort to fight with the circumstances which were totally opposed to her. Hir is portrayed as someone with knowledge of religious law. Actually this knowledge was provided to the women of colonial Punjab just for the sake of domestic tasks. In contrast, Hir by

attaining the knowledge has used it to rubble the patriarchal constraints. The image of Hir reflects her resentful thoughts when she contradicted with kazi who has been regarded as the wisest and sacred person of the tribe having amples of worldly grasp. She encounters kazi with democratic authority. She declared to kazi that she will remain stubborn and over-wrought for her love with ranjha. Hir proclaimed:

'I have pledged my troth to Ranjha, O Kazi,

why does my mother indulged in lies?

'My faith I have bestowned on Ranjha,

She may give the Khera all else there is.

'She is churning only butter-milk,

to Ranjha I have given the cream.

'Like the devil she pours poison in my throat.

While my poor life spills over the brim.

'She looks for fish in a puddle of urine,

Like a fisherman bereft of sight.' (Sekhon 76, 77)

Then Hir exchanged hot words with her mother Maliki. Maliki tried to convince Hir to give up her lover but Hir being stoic provided counterarguments to each of Maliki's objections to her relationship with Ranjha. Hir has been characterized in her dialogues. Maliki uses a wide range of arguments to support her position.

Hir comes and curtsies to her mother,

but is received with liberal abuse.

'Adultress, slave, devoid of shame,

all reddled with evil, black of face!

'O run-away, bird of ill-omen,

to have truned your back on Allah's grace!

'Midstream I will drawn you tonight, O girl,

it seems your doom is drawing close.

'You have exhausted my patience, indeed,

if only remains to slaughter you now!

I warn you again to mend your ways,

Why must you be he cowherd's brde?

'All like a cow in heat that goes

and rubs against the bull her hide!

'You ought to be beaten like clothes being washed,

to have your skin striped red and blue.' (Sekhon 56)

Hir's retort was more fierced than her mother's taughts when Hir was trothed with Khera without her consent:

'When did I ask you for a groom?

You have acted as from an ancient grudge.

'Unwise are they, O mother, who lay

bricks meant for a tower in a drain of sewage.

'Why do you now distort the facts?

Like thieves you have carried out this deal.

'You have joined the swan to an owl, indeed,

to a satyr given a fairy maid.

'You are eager to suck a cane of sugar

all at once, not node by node.' (Sekhon 71)

Comparatively, the text of Mirza-Sahiban and Sassi- Punnun never displays the bitter and remorseful talks between a lover and the society. Framing the title of the present research, neither Sahiban nor Sassi uttered a word with mutinous attitude. They didn't oppose the

dominating factors of their life. They didn't dare to throw a challenge in front of any of the member of the family and society. They submitted in front of society and also in front of death. Death was not a natural death which came to them. They themselves opted for it, being a hopeless player of the game who gives up after surviving for a while and quits the game. Love is also like a game where player like Hir pondered over the situation and grasped success. It was her fate that she was poisoned by her family. Hir, is portrayed as a woman of strong conviction.

As the research has demonstrated that among three female protagonists, Hir is declared as the passionate woman who convinced each and everyone by using various rhetorical strategies to try and wobble other to her position. She is the mere representative of unconcerned figure who only has concern with her own rights rather than the norms of the society. Waris Shah's Hir portrays her as buoyant, tough and often declining ignomnies by male ideologies or structures of authority in which gender identities are constructed, painted, conferred and disputed in everyday life.

The focus of this paper is to trace the conduct of the female heroes which also concludes that Hir was the only victim who tried and then attained triumph in terminating and shedding all the patriarchal laws and traditions. Through her character she has revealed her extraordinary flair with her monumental fortitude during her agony. Other two heroines Sahiban and Sassi have proved themselves to be subservient of the male oriented society. It seems that both of them have opted for the path of death just to get rid of the sufferings and troubles. On the other hand Hir having similar troubles counter-acted to the conditions. Therefore, it can be concluded that Hir is the singular female protagonist who has crushed the patriarchal crowns of the males into ashes by eloping with Ranjha even from her in-laws home.

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